

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 16255

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS/ JA EAIR
SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTION TO RESOLUTION OF LUFTHANSA HIJACKING

REF: TOKYO 16073 (NOTAL)

1. DRAMATIC RESCUE OF LUFTHANSA HOSTAGES BY WEST GERMAN
COMMANDO OPERATION PREDICTABLY REANIMATED PUBLIC DEBATE
WITH JAPAN OVER GOJ'S ACQUIESCENCE TO TERRORIST DEMANDS IN
EARLIER JAL HIJACKING. JAPANESE MEDIA VIGOROUSLY PRESSED
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FOR SECOND THOUGHTS ON WISDOM OF
JAPAN'S "SOFT LINE." AT INITIAL READING, PUBLIC OPINION
APPEARED MIXED AS TO APPLICABILITY OF GERMAN TACTICS BY
JAPANESE.

2. AFTER EXPRESSING RELIEF OVER SAFETY OF LUFTHANSA
PASSENGERS, PM FUKUDA DEFENDED HIS OWN GOVERNMENT'S
DECISIONS DURING JAL HIJACKING. HE COMMENTED TO
JOURNALISTS THAT UNLIKE WEST GERMANY, JAPAN COULD
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NOT HAVE LAUNCEED OVERSEAS OFFENSIVE OPERATION
AGAINST TERRORISTS: "IF THE (JAL) HIJACKING HAD
OCCURRED IN JAPAN, THE STORY MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT,
BUT SUCH A TOUGH ACTION COULD NOT HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN
A FOREIGN COUNTRY."

3. FOLLOWING PM'S LEAD, OTHER GOJ OFFICIALS HAVE

NOTED:

- UNDER CONSTITUTION, SELF-DEFENSE FORCES ARE PROHIBITED FROM OVERSEAS OPERATIONS AND ALTHOUGH UNDER SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF LAW, POLICE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO SO, THEY ARE NOT AS WELL-TRAINED OR EQUIPPED AS GERMANS FOR THIS SORT OF UNIQUE OPERATION.
- COUNTERTERRORIST ATTACK WOULD REQUIRE PERMISSION OF COUNTRY IN WHICH PLANE WAS LOCATED; BANGLADESH WOULD HAVE BEEN UNWILLING TO GIVE SUCH PERMISSION.
- ALTHOUGH GERMANS WERE SUCCESSFUL, SUCH OPERATIONS CARRIED HIGH RISK OF LARGE-SCALE LOSS OF LIFE WHICH GOJ MIGHT FIND UNACCEPTABLE IN FUTURE SITUATIONS.

4. HARUNORI KAYA, DIRGEN CONSULAR EMMIGRATION AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING JAL HIJACKING TASK FORCE, COMMENTED TO POLCOUNS THAT HE DOUBTED WHETHER JAPANESE APPROACH TO TERRORISM WOULD BE MUCH CHANGED BY OUTCOME TO LUFTHANSA AFFAIR. JAPANESE WERE INCLINED TO GIVE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO AVOIDING RISK TO INNOCENT LIVES--A THEME PICKED UP IN NUMBER OF EDITORIALS WHICH, WHILE LAUDING FRG SUCCESS, HAVE NOTED DIFFERENCES IN GERMAN AND JAPANESE APPROACHES. KAYA ALSO SAID THAT DOMESTIC LAW WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED TO PERMIT POLICE TO BE DESPATCHED

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ABROAD, AND THOSE POLICE WITH ANTI-TERRORIST CAPABILITY WERE FOR MOST PART UNDER CONTROL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. KAYA ANTICIPATED, HOWEVER, THAT LATEST INCIDENT WOULD SERVE AS FURTHER STIMULUS FOR LEGISLATION TO TIGHTEN ANTI-HIJACK MEASURES AT AIR-PORTS, CONTROL OF PASSPORTS, ETC.

5. COMMENT: WHILE LUFTHANSA INCIDENT MAY PROVIDE RENEWED GRIST FOR DIET INTERPELLATION MILL, WE DO NOT BELIEVE GOVERNMENT WILL BE SERIOUSLY EMBARRASSED. SUCCESSFUL FREEING OF HOSTAGES ON HIJACKED NAHASAKI BUS JUST TWO DAYS BEFORE THROUGH GERMAN STYLE BLITZ WILL ALSO HELP TAKE HEAT OFF--JAPANESE STORMED VEHICLE AT 4 A.M., KILLING ONE TERRORIST AND WOUNDING THE OTHER WITHOUT HARM TO PASSENGERS.

MANSFIELD

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